

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 17, 2012

CONTACT: Julian Phillips 718 855-8018

Open Letter to Governor Cuomo

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I write to you today, deeply concerned about the proposal to close down Kingsboro Psychiatric Hospital's in-patient services. This facility serves a vital purpose in the community in treating an extremely vulnerable patient population, and is the only one of its kind in the borough of Brooklyn.

I understand that the current proposal would merge the in-patient services offered at Kingsboro with those provided at the South Beach Psychiatric Center in Staten Island, at a cost of \$4 million to the State of New York. However, not all current patients at Kingsboro will be transferred – only 150 beds will be added to the Staten Island facility, even though the 290 in-patient beds at Kingsboro are mostly full. I am concerned that the families for those who are transferred will have to travel over two and a half hours by public transit just to visit their loved ones. For those who are not transferred, I worry that their care may be compromised as they prepare for discharge back into the community.

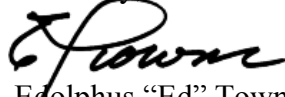
I also worry about the impact that the lack of these services will have on future patients. I am reminded of when St. Mary's hospital closed its doors. We were lucky that there were other hospitals in Brooklyn that could catch the patients in need of care, however, the strain that resulted with longer wait-times in emergency rooms, and higher patient case-loads for doctors and nurses is still being felt today. Because Kingsboro offers the only longer-term in-patient option for patients in the borough, future patients will have no option but to bounce between short stays in other in-patient programs, or to travel two and half hours to receive the care that they need. This is a huge disservice to the future, extremely vulnerable patients, who may ultimately choose to forego needed care.

Although Kingsboro has had its share of challenges over the years, many of these issues have stemmed from systemic under-funding of the facility. If we re-invest in this hospital with the \$4 million already set aside for the proposed transfer, the hospital could conceivably go a long way towards becoming a model of care that other facilities across the country could look to for guidance.

I also believe that a strong level of support from the community is key to rebuilding this vital facility. I would encourage the hospital to establish a strong community board, and in doing so, ensure that some of the past mistakes do not reoccur. Community stakeholders can provide valuable insight that can ultimately result in better care for the vulnerable patient groups served.

I ask you to reconsider your plan, reinvest in the existing facility, and help us turn this hospital into a model that all psychiatric hospitals in the country can look to for inspiration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Towns', with a stylized, cursive script.

Edolphus "Ed" Towns
Member of Congress (NY-10)